



James Bridle. Laaaaaandsat.tumblr.com (2014).

Aerial Imagery in Print, 1860 to Today

The Museum of Modern Art, Cullman Education Building
Mezzanine

June 14–September 11, 2016

This exhibition examines the use of traditional publishing in cultivating a discourse around aerial imagery in the 20th and 21st centuries. Beginning with 19th-century literature on the innovations of flight and photography, the exhibit proceeds to addresses aerial photography's increasing utilization in the 20th century. The show concludes with publications by contemporary artists who incorporate aerial imagery into their work, setting the scene for a second century of elevated viewing.

Organized by Jennifer Tobias, Reader Services Librarian

New Technologies, New Vision

The developments of both flight and photography enhanced human vision, enabling new ways to perceive and interpret the experience of modern life. As the two technologies evolved and spread, aerial imagery became conventional—and utilized for diverse purposes. More recently, satellite imagery, geographic information systems, and drones have ushered in a new era of visual invention and expression. The dissemination of this imagery in print exposed readers to then-advanced technologies long before they could participate directly.

Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon). **À Terre et en l'air. Mémoires du Géant, par Nadar** (On the Ground and in the Air: Memoirs with the Giant, by Nadar) (Paris: Dentu, 1864)

The photographer Nadar published a memoir of his 1863 journey via hot air balloon between Paris and Hanover. The book includes an engraving, then more common than photographic illustrations. Nadar would later embrace another kind of aerial imaging: sending micrographic images via carrier pigeon.

Thomas Kramer, Hilar Stadler, and Alex Capus. **Eduard Spelterini: Fotografien des Ballonpioniers** (Eduard Spelterini: Photographs of a Balloon Pioneer) (Zürich: Scheidegger and Spiess, 2007)

Balloon pioneer Eduard Spelterini's photographs are reproduced from the original glass plate negatives and informed by an investigation into the showman's self-invented biography.

For Photography from the Air (Woodside, New York: Fairchild, 1934)

Sherman Fairchild innovated numerous photographic technologies and established the preeminent twentieth-century aerial imaging service in the United States. A survey of the country, along with aggressive marketing, helped to make aerial photography a standard tool for city planning, agriculture, journalism, and real estate development. This combination technical manual and sales brochure details the company's range of equipment and services.

A. J. Eardley. **Aerial Photographs: Their Use and Interpretation** (New York: Harper, 1941)

Beaumont Newhall. **Airborne Camera: The World from the Air and Outer Space** (New York: Hastings House, 1969)

Newhall, MoMA's first photography curator (and librarian) is well known for writing the first substantial history of photography as an aesthetic medium. This later publication expands that history to include aerial and space photography.

Christoph Engel. **Ungefähre Landschaft** (Approximate Landscape) (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009)

Engel pieces together Google Earth images into large-scale aerial views.

Futurefarmers. **A Variation on Powers of Ten** (Berlin: Sternberg, 2012)

In homage to the Charles and Ray Eames film *Powers of Ten* (1977, book version in the case Postwar Air and Space Imagery) the group Futurefarmers organized ten picnics as means to expand upon the film's many themes. Here geography theorist Jake Kosek picnics with friends, bees, and a drone.

James Bridle. **Laaaaaandsat.tumblr.com**

in *Printed Web* no. 2 (2014)

The Landsat program has continuously recorded images of Earth from space since 1972. The satellite currently captures four hundred images per day, completing coverage of the Earth's surface every sixteen days. As Landsat images are posted to the U.S. Geological Survey website, artist James Bridle posts them to his own website, of which this is a printed excerpt.

Daniel Ryser. **Delivery for Mr. Assange** (Basel: Echtzeit, 2014)

Artists Carmen Weisskopf and Domagoj Smoljo mailed a GPS tracker and live webcam to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange at his Ecuadorian Embassy asylum in London, recording location and images along the way.

The Avant Garde Takes to the Air

Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. **Voici le domaine de Rose**

Sélavy. Vue prise en aéroplane par Man Ray, 1921 (Here Is the Domain of Rose Sélavy. View Taken from an Airplane by Man Ray, 1921) in *Littérature* no. 5 (1922)

Man Ray's acclaimed "aéroplane" image of Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (1915–23) circulated in this Surrealist journal, disseminating his radical art-making strategies to a community of avant-garde artists.

Kazimir Malevich. **Die gegenstandslose Welt** (The Nonobjective World) (München: Langen, 1927)

Malevich invoked aerial photography in his treatise on abstraction, which he termed Suprematism.

Le Corbusier-Saugnier. **Des yeux qui ne voient pas . . . les avions** (What the Eye Doesn't See . . . Airplanes) in *L'Esprit Nouveau* no. 9 (1921)

Le Corbusier. **Aircraft** (London: Studio, 1935)

Visionary architect and publisher Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret) embraced air travel as a symbol of modernity, as seen in this book and journal.

Pittura Aeropittura Futurista (Futurist *aeropittura* painting)
(Trieste: Circolo Artistico, 1931)

This facsimile of the catalogue for an exhibition of *aeropittura* artists, who embraced flight as a realization of the Futurist ideals of mechanized speed and power, includes Marinetti's "Manifesto Dell'Aeropittura."

Stile Futurista (Futurist Style) no. 3 (1934)

An "estetica della Macchina" (machine aesthetic) was the focus of this Futurist architecture and design journal. This issue features an airport design and an *aeropittura* mural.

Frank Lloyd Wright. **The Disappearing City** (New York: Payson, 1932)

Wright's manifesto against conventional urbanism presages his vision for Broadacre City, a utopian ideal of modern yet rural city planning.

Bill Brandt. **The English at Home** (London: Batsford, 1936)

In print books, aerial photographs are often used as endpapers. As in a film, these images serve as the "establishing shot" to set the scene. In Brandt's photobook on English culture, the front endpapers show endless row houses, emphasizing conformity and social order. In contrast, the back endpapers show farmland, referencing the picturesque.

Aerial Reconnaissance and Camouflage in the Literature of War

Roland Penrose. **Home Guard Manual of Camouflage** (London: Routledge, 1941). University of Chicago Library

Writer and Quaker pacifist Roland Penrose seems an unlikely author for a book about wartime defense, but his gentle tone and humane drawings convey a sense of calm amid fear and uncertainty.

U.S. Army War Department. **Camouflage** (Washington, D.C.: General Printing Office, 1943)

A plain brown wrapper serves as camouflage for a full-color cover and detailed graphics.

Norman Bel Geddes. **War Maneuver Models Created for Life Magazine** (New York: MoMA, 1944)

“Models are a new form of picture journalism,” declares this catalog of scale models by the designer Norman Bel Geddes, enabling “the camera to take positions which would normally be highly unusual or impossible.”

Pratt Institute. **Industrial Camouflage Manual** (New York: Reinhold, 1942)

Under professor Konrad Wittman, Pratt Institute offered classes in camouflage technique beginning in 1940.

MoMA. **Camouflage for Civilian Defense** (1942). The Museum of Modern Art Archives. Circulating Exhibition Records. II.1.44.1.3

This reproduction of a didactic panel from a MoMA traveling exhibition explains how “Camouflage Must Deceive Both the Eye and the Camera.”

Harrell Fletcher. **The American War** (Atlanta: J and L, 2006)

Fletcher photographed the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City, demonstrating the contested nature of war images.

Sophie Ristelhueber. **Aftermath: Kuwait 1991** (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992)

Ristelhueber's photobook, originally published in French as *Fait* (Fact), at first appears to be an uninflected series of photographs documenting the Kuwait desert, but close viewing and an excerpt from a military treatise reveals a reflection upon damage wrought during the Persian Gulf War (1990–91). The small trim size suggests a dystopic travel guide.

Miranda Maher. **1000 Coordinates of Violence** (Brooklyn: Horse in a Storm Press, 2001)

By limiting the content of her artist's book to the latitude and longitude of conflict sites, Maher creates an effect similar to that of viewing aerial imagery: "Threatening information is often literally kept at a distance. . . . These deflections help us feel safe . . . but they also impede examination of our relationship to the profound and unremitting violence of history."

Useful Photography War Special (2002)

The journal *Useful Photography* compiles "found" images on diverse themes. Here, an internet survey of contemporary military camouflage demonstrates that even ideas of invisibility are culturally inflected.

David Mellor. **A Guide for the Protection of the Public in Peacetime** (London: Archive of Modern Conflict, 2014)

The Archive of Modern Conflict collects unusual photographs of social ruptures and encourages the creation of new interpretive works such as this one. The background patterns refer to actual photo albums.

Postwar Air and Space Imagery

Following the militarization of aerial photography during the two world wars, its many peacetime applications included artistic experiment.

Gilles Ivain (Ivan Chatcheglov). **Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau** (Formula for a New Urbanism) in *Internationale Situationiste* no. 1 (1958)

Joyfully complicating ideals of rational city planning, artists involved in the Situationist movement celebrated subjective urban experience.

Ed Ruscha. **Thirty Four Parking Lots in Los Angeles** (Los Angeles: Ruscha, 1967)

A compilation of readymade aerial photographs, Ruscha's iconic artist's book emphasizes the Conceptualist idea of "deskilling."

Office of Charles and Ray Eames. **Powers of Ten: A Book About the Relative Size of Things in the Universe and the Effect of Adding Another Zero** (New York: Scientific American, 1994)

This book is based on the 1977 film by designers Charles and Ray Eames that took viewers on a voyage from atomic to galactic scale, organized in magnitudes of ten. Though the film wasn't widely distributed at first, an inexpensive print version helped to popularize it. The journey begins at human scale with a top-down photograph of a picnicking couple. One of the books on the blanket is *Earth Photographs from Gemini III, IV, and V*, seen in the case *Space Is the Place*.

James Turrell. **Mapping Spaces: A Topological Survey of the Work** (New York: Blum, 1987)

For land artist James Turrell, flight and aerial imaging techniques are integral to the development of his monumental Roden Crater project (1977–): “For me, flying really dealt with these spaces delineated by air conditions, by visual penetration, by sky conditions; some were visual, some were only felt.”

Space Is The Place

In the era of space travel, even as remote sensing technology produces ever-more sophisticated images, there remains a drive for astronauts to put a human eye in the viewfinder.

Ron Schick and Julia Van Haften. **The View from Space: American Astronaut Photography, 1962–1972** (New York: Potter, 1988)

The authors compiled photographs taken by astronauts themselves. For example, during the 1969 Apollo 12 voyage, Charles Conrad snapped Al Bean’s moon walk. The photographer’s shadow is visible at left.

Whole Earth Catalog (1969)

“Why haven’t we seen a photograph of the Whole Earth yet?” asked Stuart Brand in the 1960s, campaigning for NASA to produce a hemispheric view of the planet. Brand featured space images on the covers of his groundbreaking *Whole Earth Catalog*.

Michael Najjar. **Michael Najjar: Outer Space** (Berlin: Distanz, 2014)

The artist Michael Najjar, preparing to be the first artist in space, documents his extensive training.

Cristina De Middel. **The Afronauts** (Cadiz: de Middel, 2012)

De Middel’s artist’s book envisions Zambian space exploration.

The Apocalyptic Sublime

Throughout the twentieth century, aerial imagery aided exploration, development, commerce, and war. In the new century, books turn the lens on the environmental consequences of these activities, keeping inconvenient truths in the public eye.

David Maisel. **Black Maps: American Landscape and the Apocalyptic Sublime** (Göttingen: Steidl, 2013)

Maisel's photographs create compelling visual mysteries, usually involving a tension between natural and man-made landscape changes.

Michael Light. **Bingham Mine/Garfield Stack** (Santa Fe: Radius, 2009)

Light's photobook documents the world's largest man-made excavation, a Utah copper mine.

Alex MacLean. **Over: The American Landscape at the Tipping Point** (New York: Abrams, 2008)

Lucy Helton. **Actions of Consequence** (New York: Helton, 2014)

Helton fabricates and photographs fictional spaces in which, "stripped of the carpet of life, the planet I have created is reduced to strange geological landscapes that suggest a catastrophic past."

Aerial Imaging in Our Time

Susanne Kriemann. **One Time One Million: Migratory Birds, Romantic Capitalism** (Berlin: Roma, 2009)

Using a vintage aerial camera, Kriemann created an elegy to its maker, innovator Victor Hasselblad.

Christoph Engel. **Ungefähre Landschaft** (Approximate Landscape) (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009)
Engel pieces together Google Earth images into large-scale aerial views.

Mishka Henner. **Dutch Landscapes** (Manchester, England: Blurb, 2011)

Henner juxtaposes the particular Google Earth anonymization motif used by the Dutch government with images of land reclamation, arguing that the pixilation represents a hypothetical threat while flooding represents a real one.

Julia Rometti and Victor Costales. **Without Rain: Partial Nights, Aerial Days** (São Paulo: Livro Para Ver, 2010)

The abundance of images in this artist's book of postcards from Latin America reminds us that the aerial viewpoints typical of postcards are rarely experienced by the sender.

moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1663